

THE
PASTORAL LETTER
AND
ORDINANCE

OF THE RIGHT REVEREND
JOHN FRANCIS DE LA MARCHE,
LORD BISHOP OF LEON,

ADDRESSED TO THE
CLERGY both SECULAR and REGULAR, and
to all the FAITHFUL of his DIOCESE.

TRANSLATED into ENGLISH from the ORIGINAL FRENCH
BY THE

Rev. John Milner, F. A. S.



L O N D O N:

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ORDINANCE

JOHN RICHARD REYNOLDS

JOHN FRANCIS DE LA MARCHE
LORD BISHOP OF LEON

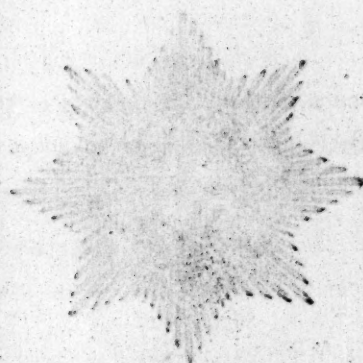
RETURN TO THE

to all the farmers of his district. Clearly both secular and religious.

RECEIVED INTO ENGLISH FROM ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

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Rev. John Milner, D.D.



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[illegible]

P R E F A C E

F T M E

T R A N S L A T O R.

THE following letter, in the original French, is the work of a foreign prelate, writing to the faithful of his own diocese on particular circumstances relating to himself and to them; nevertheless, it is conceived that a translation of it will not be unacceptable to our countrymen of different religious persuasions.

It appears that many are at a loss to account for the conduct of the French clergy, during those convulsions which have shaken their church to the ground, from not being acquainted with the motives on which it is grounded.

grounded. In an early stage of the Revolution they were seen submitting, almost without a struggle, to be stripped of their landed property and chartered rights: at present they are found braving persecution, in its most terrifying forms of indigence, calumny, exile and death, with a unanimity * and firmness unexampled in the annals of the church since the days of Decius or Dioclesian, in defence of objects which are not understood or distinctly seen on this side of the water. These however are clearly expressed, by one of those sufferers, who must be allowed to understand them the best, in pages 10, 11, and 12 of the following letter†.

* Out of 131 French bishops only four have been seduced, by allurements or threats, to fall in with the measures of the National Assembly in ecclesiastical concerns. The disproportion in the inferior order of clergy has not been quite so great; however, a great part of those who had yielded have already retracted and sung their recantation.

† The translator is infinitely happy to find, in the passages here referred to, a fresh proof of the strict conformity between the system of church government which the French clergy defend in the midst of persecution, and that which he himself has lately published to the world in a work entitled, *THE DIVINE RIGHT OF EPISCOPACY, WITH REMARKS ON THE OATHS OF SUPREMACY AND ALLEGIANCE*. Sold by Messrs. Coghlan, Robinsons, &c.

It

It cannot be less an object of public curiosity to know how the clergy of France behave under the trying reverse of fortune they experience: what means they have recourse to for the redress of their injuries: and what doctrine and advice they dispense from their secure retreats to their numerous adherents in their respective dioceses and parishes, to whom they never were dearer than at the present moment. — The following letter is equally calculated to give information on these heads, and may serve as a specimen of the many edifying pastoral instructions which the French prelates have addressed to their flocks during the present persecution. It is presumed that those who are best acquainted with the gospel spirit, cannot but be charmed and edified with those sentiments of charity, forgiveness of injuries and abstraction from the world, which beam through the whole of the following composition; and that those who are versed in the sacred scriptures, will be pleased to find these sentiments expressed, for the most part, either in its language, or in allusions to it. The satisfaction of this perusal will be redoubled to those honorable and respectable personages, who having formed an acquaintance with this venerable exile, have by their

conduct to him supported our national character for hospitality and generosity, from the conviction which such persons will have, that the spirit, animates the present letter, is the same which they have observed in the conversation and life of its author.

The following pages will also present us with a contrast, which it will be impossible not to remark, between the friends and the enemies of a christianity in an important point in which the latter have often provoked a competition. Who has not heard the incessant invectives of the apostle of toleration*, as he stiled himself, against every species of religious persecution, and the reiterated declarations of his disciples, the modern philosophers, in favor of the first of human rights, that of conscience? But no sooner have the latter got power into their hands, than, after paying more than mortal honors † to the pu-

* Voltaire.

† All the periodical prints have given an account of the solemn translation of Voltaire's remains into the church of St. Genvieve, which, from being dedicated to the worship of the living God, DEO OPT. MAX. is now prostituted into a charnel-house for those, who, by blaspheming their Maker and destroying the peace of mankind, have merited, from their congenial spirits in the French legislature, the title of HOMMES ILLUSTRES, which inscription, it is understood, has now taken place of the former.

trid

trid remains of their reprobate * master, they first destroy the very ground-work of their national religion, and then pursue, with unrelenting and outrageous persecution, its ministers, in order to oblige them to swear that whatever these atheists and deists *have done in ecclesiastical matters is right; and that all will be right which they may hereafter do:* for such is the tenor of the famous civic oath, which the French clergy are tortured to take by legal tyranny and illegal violence. At the time this translation was in hand, notwithstanding all the numberless emigrations of the clergy, more than ninety of that body in the single diocese of Leon, after undergoing the prescribed penalty of being deprived of their livings, were languishing in gaols, like criminals, for no other real or pretended guilt than for refusing to bind their consciences by the aforesaid extraordinary engagement.

* See an account of the terrifying and desperate end of this unhappy man (though but a month or two before he had endeavoured to reconcile himself to the church, and actually called for the sacraments) in the learned Abbé Baruel's *Lettres Helviennes*, vol. 2.—See also an English pamphlet entitled, *AN ACCOUNT OF THE WRITINGS, LIFE and DEATH of VOLTAIRE*. Sold by Coghillan, &c.

It would be tedious to recount the particulars of the aggravated sufferings of the clergy throughout the different parts of France, on the same account, which have generally been in proportion as each individual has been more exemplary in his manners, and the discharge of his sacred functions: in the mean time, if there has been a loose clergyman under censure for his irregularities, or a renegado Monk or Friar, who has been a scandal to his order, he has been sure to be called forward (there is no question with such about oaths of any form) to take upon himself the care of souls and the credit of religion; and can we be surprised, that those who have any pretensions to christianity in that unhappy country, should leave the constitutional churches empty, and fly, for the comforts of religion, to the prisons and deserts of their former pastors. On the same pretence, of refusing the civic oath, or out of the mere hatred of their character, many of these conscientious ecclesiastics have been assassinated in their houses, cloysters or churches, if not by the express orders, at least by the acknowledged connivance of the ruling powers.

In speaking of the persecution which is at present carried on in France, by those who
have

have no religion, against those who have, I cannot avoid adopting the striking observations of an author, whose warmth of heart and imagination is tempered by an equal coolness of judgment. His words are these:

“ The old persecutors acted, or pretended to
 “ act from zeal towards some systems of piety
 “ and virtue: they gave strong preferences
 “ to their own; and if they drove people
 “ from one religion, they provided for them
 “ another, in which men might take refuge,
 “ and expect consolation. But the new per-
 “ secution is not against a variety in con-
 “ science, but against all conscience. It
 “ professes contempt towards its object; and
 “ whilst it treats all religion with scorn, is not
 “ so much as neutral about the modes: it
 “ unites the two evils of intolerance and in-
 “ difference.” *Burke's appeal*, p. 11.

There is a malignity in human nature, which cannot bear the effulgence of pure, unclouded superiority of merit, and which therefore endeavours to throw a veil over it. All the world must be struck with the heroism which the French clergy display at the present moment; but the generality seem desirous of accounting for their firmness upon any other principle than that of conscience.

Some

Some ascribe it to a love of power, which they still hold over the minds of many, whilst they retain their spiritual authority; others to the hopes of obtaining better terms, in a possible return of things to their ancient situation. How ill-grounded these and all such conjectures are, which are obliged to have recourse to an interested motive, will appear from the letter lately published, which the thirty prelates, who were members of the National Assembly, addressed to their ecclesiastical head, by way of consulting him on the best means of restoring peace to the church of France; and in which they purely and simply resign their bishoprics into his hands; in case he thinks it expedient to confirm the uncannonical and invalid institution of the present intruders, and to give force to those alterations of spiritual jurisdiction, which have been vainly attempted by an incompetent authority. —After shewing how ready they ever were to concur with the civil power in making every desired arrangement which it was in their power to make, and lamenting that they were refused permission to meet their brethren in council, in order to consider what it was in their power to do for this purpose: on which subject they exclaim: “ The associations of
“ citizens

" citizens are declared to be legal ; it is only
 " in regard to us that liberty is an empty
 " sound : " after painting, in glowing colours,
 the injustice they and their brethren to the
 number of 128 have suffered, in consequence
 of their refusal to take the civic oath, " on any
 " other terms than those of preserving invio-
 " late the spiritual authority of the church in
 " the election, institution and jurisdiction of
 " bishops ; " after describing the sufferings of so
 great a number of faithful pastors, " who have
 " been insulted and attacked in their churches,
 " in the chairs of truth and on the steps of the
 " sanctuary, and of so many pious virgins,
 " whose youth, innocence, and the feebleness
 " of whose age and sex, have not been able to
 " protect them from injury and outrage ; " in
 short, after displaying that lamentable picture,
 which the present state of the church of France
 presents ; they thus proceed : " What is the
 " sentiment of the universal church of which
 " Rome is the centre, and of which a learned
 " and exemplary pontiff is the worthy inter-
 " preter ? — We have placed no limits, nor
 " will we place any, to our personal sacrifices.
 " It shall never be said that we have, for a
 " moment, put our particular interest in com-
 " petition with those of religion. We are

“ engaged in the career of adversity : we have
 “ learned to behold this object steadfastly in
 “ every point of view ; and we have not be-
 “ gun our course without a determined reso-
 “ lution to finish it.—Rise then, Holy Fa-
 “ ther, in all the wisdom and liberty of your
 “ ministry. Dismiss from your mind every
 “ consideration of those interests, which are
 “ confined to our short lives. We fill but an
 “ invisible point of time, no less than of space ;
 “ and our fate ought not to be put in compe-
 “ tition with the destiny of empires and the
 “ promises made to the church.—Say then,
 “ are there any means in our power by which
 “ the church of France may be saved from
 “ those horrible divisions with which she is at
 “ present torn to pieces?—If it be only ne-
 “ cessary to sacrifice ourselves to appease the
 “ storm ; we know what examples the church
 “ holds up to our imitation, and we have
 “ learned to suffer in her cause. Let but the
 “ doctrine of the church be confirmed ; let
 “ but her jurisdiction in the institution of her
 “ ministers be respected and preserved ; let us
 “ but receive lawful successors, by a canoni-
 “ cal mission ; and behold, Holy Father, we
 “ here lay our resignation at your feet : our
 “ free voluntary resignation ; in order that
 “ no

“ no obstacle may remain against your taking
 “ those measures, which your Holiness, in its
 “ wisdom, may judge adviseable for restoring
 “ peace to the church of France.”

This letter was written in answer to the
 Brief, of the 10th March in the present year,
 addressed to the subscribers. It is dated May 3.
 and signed by Cardinal ROCHFCAULT,

RHEIMS,

The Archbishops of AIX,

ARLES,

and twenty-six other Archbishops or Bishops,
 being all the prélates who were members of
 the late National Assembly.

The Translator has only to add, that he has
 given the quotations from scripture and the
 fathers in Latin, as they occur in the original;
 and that he has added two or three very short
 notes for the purpose of rendering certain pas-
 sages in the text intelligible to the English
 reader.

T H E
PASTORAL LETTER
A N D
O R D I N A N C E

OF THE RIGHT REVEREND
JOHN FRANCIS, BISHOP OF LEON,
ADDRESSED TO THE
CLERGY both SECULAR and REGULAR, and
to all the FAITHFUL of his DIOCESE.

JOHN Francis De-La-Marche, by the grace of God and the authority of the holy Apostolical See, Bishop of Leon, to the Clergy both Secular and Regular, and to the other Faithful of his Diocese, sends health and benediction in our Lord Jesus Christ.

When that situation of affairs with which you, my dear brethren, are not unacquainted, obliged us to withdraw ourselves from you, the

B

hope

hope of being able to keep up a communication with our Clergy, and, through them, with the people of our diocese, was the support and comfort of our sufferings and exile : but soon did this our chief solace become the object of jealousy, and what with repeated searches, inquisitorial entries, and the violation of the public confidence of letters, the means of communication with you have become every day more rare and precarious. It was only in consequence of extraordinary precautions that part of the copies of our last letter, dated April 8, came to your hands ; and we write this very letter to you in a state of uncertainty whether it will be able to escape that restless and watchful jealousy which observes and tries to counteract all our measures.

We were aware that religious persecution raged from one end of France to the other, that from the bishops it had spread to all the inferior pastors, and that in our own diocese it every day blazed forth with fresh fury, we had however been too long acquainted with your inviolable attachment to the Catholic faith, to fear that either promises or threats could induce you to change your sentiments.

Never-

Nevertheless we were anxious to hear the particular circumstances of your combats and of your triumphs; we were impatient to learn not only the dispositions of the faithful of our diocese in general, but also the state of each particular church, and the situation of each individual amongst you. We were in this state of impatience to obtain the most minute information concerning objects that so immediately fell under our pastoral solicitude, when the news arrived that a considerable number of our dear fellow-labourers had fled for refuge to a foreign island*.

We found it impossible to resist the desire of immediately passing the sea to visit them. After a long and difficult voyage, in the course of which we were in danger of being driven, by contrary winds, upon that shore† which in other circumstances we could not have beheld without the most pleasing emotions, at length we reached that hospitable island, which had offered a friendly asylum to our brethren. We flew to their embraces, and we experienced in them a momentary emotion of soul which afforded the most exquisite satisfaction we had experienced since our

* Jersey.

† The French coast.

separation from you.—We then learned the dangers they had escaped, and the violence which had obliged them to expose themselves to those dangers. We learned what hand had dealt those repeated strokes which had so cruelly wounded the faithful ministers of the Lord: We learned that it was the pretended bishop of Finisterre*, whom alas! but a short time back we counted in the number of our evangelical co-operators, who, ever active in the work of schism, and indefatigable in the invasion of a jurisdiction that can belong to no one but ourselves, had raised up altar against altar, who had presumed to give institution to false pastors, and to issue ordinances and regulations, in consequence of which many intruding priests have been installed by open force; whilst the lawful pastors have been pursued with every kind of outrage and calumny. Amongst these we learned that some, without any consideration either for their age or their infirmities, were snatched by an armed force,

* The pretended new bishopric of Finisterre includes the whole bishoprics of Leon, and Quimper, with part of that of Treguier. Its present schismatical incumbent is the late Curate of Morlaix, a considerable parish in the diocese of Leon, in which also is situated the celebrated town of Brest.

in the dead of the night, from amidst their flocks, and ignominiously dragged to prison, and that others, to escape the same violence, had betaken themselves to flight, without either money or habitations, not daring to remain with those charitable persons who were willing to receive them, for fear of drawing a severe punishment upon them in return for their hospitality, whilst a few remained near their flocks in disguise, but in continual danger of being discovered. Notwithstanding all this we had the satisfaction to understand that the greater part of the people in the cities, and, in a manner, all the inhabitants of the country, groaned under these excesses, attached themselves with additional ardor to their lawful pastors, and shewed the greatest abhorrence of the intruders, resolutely and constantly refusing to communicate with them. Such was the account we then received, which by turns excited our admiration and our grief.

In viewing the present state of our diocese, we could not but reflect on what it had heretofore been, and the reflection drew tears from our eyes.

What is become of that majestic temple our Cathedral Church? Alas! no longer do
its

its sacred vaults each day resound with the canticles of the Lord; no longer is it distinguished by those sacred solemnities which, together with our pious and enlightened clergy, we were accustomed to celebrate, and which were equally majestic and affecting in consequence of the pomp of their ceremonies and of the concourse of an innumerable people! What is become of those precious establishments where the youth of each sex received a useful and pious education which at once fitted them for the duties of citizens and of christians; where the young ecclesiastics in particular were formed to learning and religion, who growing up under the shadow of the altar constituted our chief pleasure and hope? What is become of those houses of retirement and silence * where the word of God preached by his ministers produced its proper effect upon sinners, where the hearts of christians were melted into contrition, where en-

* In different parts of France, and particularly in the diocese of Leon, houses of retreat for secular persons were established, in which those who were disposed to spend a few days in them found every advantage and assistance to enter into themselves, by a serious contemplation of the gospel truths, for the purpose of reforming their lives and preparing for death,

mities were forgotten, revenge was suppressed, reparation was made for injustice, sins were confessed, were bewailed and were forgiven?

How are those ancient monasteries, the monuments of the piety of our ancestors, desolated and ruined; those sacred asylums of religious poverty, innocence and virtue, those pious solitudes in which the constant practice of the gospel perfection exhibited to our views an image of the lives of primitive Christians! Who that had heretofore seen our church could know it again under the disguise of its present mangled features?

Our churches are abandoned or put up to sale, our altars are a prey to the sacrilegious; the faithful ministers of the church are dispersed, pursued like criminals, and cast into prison; the people are given up to seduction and the imminent danger of schism; impiety boldly stalks abroad, scattering on all sides calumny, error and blasphemy, while the sword of persecution hangs over the head of all the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ: such is the situation into which we have been led by that master-piece of a reform, which professed to bring back amongst us the original sanctity of the apostolical age.

O my

O my God! what times hast thou reserved us to behold! *

Gladly, my dear brethren, we would become an anathema for you before the Lord. We wish it were in our power to draw down upon this our hoary head, which already bends under the weight of years, the collected pressure of all your sufferings and persecutions. God knows with what joy we would surrender our limbs to chains, provided we could, at that price, set yours at liberty: but if this be impossible, we trust, at least, that (provided all communication with you be not precluded, and that this letter wet with our tears can find its way into your hiding-places and your prisons) you will discover how dear you all are to our heart, how tenderly we feel for your sufferings, and how much we are disposed to do and to suffer to redress them.

What remedies can we now prescribe for such accumulated evils? what salutary directions is it in our power to give you? Amidst such a scene of universal confusion and ruin, how is it possible to lay down a plan for the direction of your prudence and zeal? The Spirit of God will himself guide those amongst

* Di bone! quæ me in sæcula reservasti. St. Cypr.

you, who still are at liberty to exercise their functions, how to improve to the best advantage the means that present themselves for this purpose. Thanks be to the divine mercy, for the most part, they have only to second the pious dispositions of the people. Such pastors will congratulate with those who adhere firmly to church, they will fly to the assistance of those who begin to waver, and will fortify them in the principles of catholic unity, they will lead back those who have had the misfortune to wander from the right road: they will dissuade the faithful in general from holding any communion in religious matters with the schismatical ministers and pastors: finally, they will spare neither watchings nor labours to fulfil the calling of evangelists, to pursue the work of their ministry * and to prove themselves faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ †. It is requisite however to remind these zealous pastors of the necessity they lie under of uniting the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove ‡.

* Tu vero vigila, in omnibus labora, opus fac evangelistæ, ministerium tuum imple. 2 Tim, c. 4.

† Labora sicut bonus miles Christi. Ibid. c. 3.

‡ Estote ergo prudentes sicut serpentes, & simplices sicut columbæ. Mat. 10.

We live in that unhappy time marked out by the apostle, when, rejecting sound doctrine, men assemble from all parts masters who teach according to the corrupt desires of their own hearts *. Beware of these promoters of schism, these lovers of novelty: they will watch your steps, they will drag you into their assemblies, they will ill treat you in their synagogues, they will traduce you before their tribunals †.

We can never sufficiently lament the blindness of the persecutors who have driven us from our flock. For what is the groundwork of their violence and malice against us? It is because we declare that we cannot, without betraying our ministry and our faith, surrender into the hands of a political assembly the power which Jesus Christ has committed to his church of regulating its government, its doctrine, and its discipline.

It is because we assert, that bishops who have been appointed by the church cannot cease to

* Erit enim tempus cum sanam doctrinam non sustinebunt, sed ad sua desideria coacervabunt sibi magistros prurientes auribus. 2 Tim. c. 4.

† Cavete autem ab hominibus, tradent enim vos in conciliis, & in synagogis suis flagellabunt vos: & ad præsides et ad reges ducemini propter me. Mat. 10.

be the only lawful pastors of their respective dioceses, but by their own voluntary resignation, by a canonical sentence, or by their death.

It is because we maintain, that the church alone has the right of choosing her pastors, and that the election of the ministers of a supernatural religion can never be the natural right of the people.

It is because we teach, that bishops, whose institution and mission is not derived from the center of catholic unity, are pastors without jurisdiction and without flocks; and that they form no link in that apostolical chain which unites all the faithful, through the medium of their bishops, with the visible head of the church, and with its invisible head Jesus Christ.

It is because we constantly hold and believe, that the government of the church has been entrusted by Jesus Christ to the bishops *, and that in quality of pastors they cannot be dependent upon any part of their flocks, or be subject to it.

* Attendite vobis & universo gregi, in quo vos Spiritus Sanctus posuit episcopos regere ecclesiam Dei. Act. 22.

It is because we profess, as the doctrine of the catholic church, that it is impossible to hold communion with the holy see, and to deny its primacy of authority and jurisdiction.

It is because we refuse to admit a new constitution of the clergy which the chief pastor has decided to be in opposition to the doctrine of the church, to be an usurpation of its most sacred rights*, and an assemblage of errors and heresies†.

Finally, it is because the manifest opposition, in a spiritual order of things, between the decrees of a mere political assembly and the doctrine of the church, has obliged us to reject an oath which was enjoined by the former and condemned by the latter; and because, in obedience to the commands of our divine Master, we openly declare that it is our duty to obey God rather than men‡.

How comes it that this line of conduct directed by the gospel lessons should prove so displeasing to those who profess nothing else but to lead us back to the sanctity it inculcates? How comes it that our perseverance in adhering to maxims, which are as old as chris-

* Brief of Pius VI, March 10, 1791, p. 77.

† Ditto, Feb. 23, 1791.

‡ Obedire oportet magis Deo quam hominibus. Act. 5.
tianity

tianity itself, should constitute a crime in the eyes of those who profess themselves to be our reformers? How happens it that opinions, which till now have been considered as the ornaments of the character of a catholic, are of a sudden turned, with respect to us, into a pretext for hatred and persecution?

They think that their boasted revolution cannot become compleat but by our misery, captivity and death. They are the dupes of their fanaticism, and they know not what they do. But we know what charity requires of us in their regard, which is to forgive them, to bless them, and to pray for them. What merit is there in loving those who love us? Are the greatest sinners wanting in doing this? But the maxims of our law, and the commands of our divine Legislator, we know, require of us to love our enemies, to do good to those who do evil to us, to bless those who curse us and to pray for those who calumniate us*. Let us suffer, if it be our lot, hunger and thirst; in the midst of the greatest injuries let not a

* Sed vobis dico—diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite illis qui vos oderunt, benedicite maledicentibus vobis, orate pro calumniantibus vos :—si diligetis eos qui vos diligunt, quæ vobis est gratia? Nonne & peccatores diligentes se diligunt? Luc. 6.

reproachful word or a murmur escape from our mouths; driven from our houses, and not having a place wherein to lay our heads, let us, after the example of the apostles, answer outrages with blessings, persecutions with patience, and blasphemies with prayers*.

It was this resignation of soul in the ancient Christians which surprised their pagan persecutors, and mitigated the violence of their fury. Let us hope that our christian brethren will not always be insensible to our sufferings. In the height of their error and infatuation, they consider us as their declared foes; let us not provoke them in the paroxysm of their fury; let us spare them, as much as it is in our power, the guilt of the crimes they are ready to commit against us. They will one day or another see their error, in considering, on one hand, the grievous sufferings they have inflicted upon us, and, on the other, the patience with which we have submitted to them. For mildness disarms' wrath, and vengeance at length spends itself on its patient and unresisting victims†.

* Usque in hanc horam et esurimus et sitimus, et nudi sumus, & colaphis cædimur et instabiles sumus—maledicimur & benedicimus, persecutionem patimur & sustinemus, blasphemamur & obsecramus. 1 Cor. 4.

† Responso mollis frangit iram. Prov. 15.

It is true the days of our pilgrimage are become evil, but they run rapidly on towards their end. We are seen but for a short time on the stage of life, and then we disappear. The light and momentary tribulations marked out for us, if suffered for justice sake, will produce for us an infinite weight of glory in a happy eternity *. Let hope then support us; let our courage take fire at the torch of faith. Let us no longer fix our attention on the figure of this world which passeth away; but let us raise up our eyes to the regions of eternity. How sweet is it to suffer when we have God for our witness, Jesus Christ for our judge, and heaven for our reward!

It is chiefly in the times when schism and heresy prevail that the gospel constitutes the support and comfort of a Christian. It is then he proves that his hopes are built on the promises of Christ: reposing with entire security on the authority of his unfailing word, he beholds undismayed the storms that assault the

* Id quod in præfenti est, momentaneum & leve tribulationis nostræ, supra modum in sublimitate æternæ gloriæ pondus operatur in nobis; non contemplantibus nobis quæ videntur, sed quæ non videntur. Quæ enim videntur temporalia sunt, quæ autem non videntur æterna sunt. 2 Cor. 4.

sacred vessel of the church. In the midst of their fury he confidently exclaims, The gates of hell shall not prevail against her; Jesus Christ will never abandon his chosen spouse; he will always remain with her until the consummation of ages *. Mounting then up in imagination from century to century, he discovers in the past protection of providence a pledge of its future care. He beholds the church attacked by the sword of persecution in her very cradle: he beholds, at different periods, all the powers of darkness combined to work her ruin, yet, in spite of all opposition, he still beholds her, with a steady and majestic pace, marching forward to her destined kingdom, darting from behind each misty storm more pure and dazzling rays, and making ample amends for her losses in some countries by fresh conquests over others.

However, the general promises of God in favour of the eternal and universal empire of the church are not sufficient to calm the apprehensions we entertain for the particular

* Et ego dico tibi, quia tu es Petrus, & super hanc petram ædificabo ecclesiam meam, & portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam. Mat. 16.—Et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem sæculi. Mat. 28.

fate of the church of France. It is true that its pastors have on no occasion manifested greater abilities; virtue or courage, than they do at present; it is also true that the faith of our christian countrymen in general was never more lively and ardent than it is now. But still the existence of a schism amongst us has been solemnly denounced: and this schism is supported by actual force. Will this unhappy evil gain ground amongst us? will it extend itself to future ages? and is it doomed that this great and illustrious church, after having for fourteen hundred years stood firm against all the heresies and schisms that have spread desolation over the other parts of Europe, should at last fall to the ground with the French monarchy in an unhappy age of tumults and confusion?

It is not permitted us to fathom the depths of the judgments of God; his ways are investigable to our weak sight. Still however we are persuaded that, though the Almighty chastises us, he will not abandon us*; that it is in our power to disarm his

* Propter quod nunquam quidem à vobis misericordiam suam amovet; corripiens vero in adversis populum suum non derelinquet, 2 Macchab. c. 6.

justice, and that it is our duty to implore his clemency.

There is no doubt but that our particular iniquities have drawn down upon our heads that persecution which the clergy now experience, and that the general neglect of religion and morality has overturned the civil government. We cannot call in question that our crimes and disorders have provoked the justice of God to send us this dreadful scourge of schism under which our church now suffers and groans*.

It is then by sincere contrition and penitential tears that we must appease the divine wrath. Exiled as we are from our churches, we can no longer prostrate ourselves between the vestibule and the altar; let us then fall down at the foot of the cross. Let us pass over the years of our lives in the bitterness of our souls. If where two or three persons are assembled together in the name of Christ, they may expect to be heard, what may not

* *Intelligendum est enim & confitendum pressuræ istius tam turbidam vastitatem, quæ gregem nostrum maximâ ex parte populata est, & adhuc usque populatur, secundum peccata nostra venisse, dum viam Domini non tenemus, nec data nobis ad salutem cœlestia mandata servamus. St. Cypr. in secessu. Ep. 11.*

be expected from the united force of our persevering supplications? Unite yourselves then in spirit with your bishop: The distance that separates us is a mere nothing in the sight of the infinite being, and it is not in the power of men to prevent the communication of our souls together in the holy exercise of prayer. Let then our conjoint prayers mount up, at the same time, from whatever places providence shall appoint for our abode, and from the deserts in which you wander, the hiding places in which you are concealed, and from the prisons in which you groan, and let them meet in concert together before the throne of Jesus Christ sitting at the right hand of his eternal Father. Let us, by a tender and filial devotion, engage the powerful intercession of that holy being, who is the queen of angels, the refuge of sinners and the mother of Jesus; let us desire her to pray that her divine Son would cast an eye of pity on his pastors, who are scattered abroad, and on his flock, which is a prey to hirelings. Let us conjure the Almighty with the greatest fervor, for the prayer of his servants, to give us peace, to put an end to our banishment and to our dangers, to grant a re-establishment to our church and prosperity to our empire,

and, after the dark clouds and furious tempests which we have experienced, to send light and a calm serenity amongst us*.

Notwithstanding there yet appears no preface of this happy change, notwithstanding our misfortunes, which seemed at their greatest height, rather encrease than diminish, yet let us not give ourselves up to sorrow like those who have no hope†. This would neither be conformable to your past fortitude, nor to the divine model we ought to have constantly before our eyes. In the cause of religion it is to the omnipotence of grace we are to look up for resources. It is this which moulds the hearts of the people and of their princes; this brings about the designs of providence by ways that are equally sweet and certain: and, if our evils increase and are perpetuated, it affords us strength proportionable to their extent and duration. Grace operates

* Rogemus pacem maturius reddi, cito latebris nostris & periculis subveniri: impleri quæ famulis suis Dominus dignatur ostendere, redintegrationem ecclesiæ, securitatem salutis nostræ, post pluvias serenitatem, post tenebras lucem, post procellas & turbines placidam serenitatem. St. Cypr. in Secess. Ep. 11.

† Ut non contristemini sicut cæteri qui spem non habent. 1 Thess. 4.

still greater wonders ; it raises man above the condition of his nature ; it makes him find his strength in his own weakness, his glory in his humiliations, his joy in his sufferings. Thro' grace, the christian, after the example of the apostles, finds in persecutions, imprisonments, and insults, a source of delight, rejoicing that he is thought worthy to suffer for Jesus Christ*.

In fact these are the sentiments, as we are well assured, with which you have ever been animated in the midst of your troubles and sufferings.

The sight of the effects which divine grace produces in your souls, suspends our grief, and forces us to exclaim in the words of St. Cyprian. *O blessed church of ours!* † Blessed it undoubtedly is in possessing a ministry which cannot be accused, till it is disguised by calumny ; which, being equally assailed by threats and allurements, by want and affluence, by persecution and flattery, has at once

* Ibant gaudentes a conspectu concilii, quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati. Act. 5.

† O beatam ecclesiam nostram, quam sic honor divinæ dignationis illuminat, quam, temporibus nostris, gloriosus martyrum sanguis illustrat! St. Cypr. in Secess. Ep. 12,

sacrificed every worldly interest to conscientious integrity, and stands prepared for the worst of torments that persecution can inflict*. Happy is the church which can boast of a multitude of religious virgins, whose faith has been immoveable amidst the various temptations of allurements, of violence and of indigence; from whom menaces could not extort even a connivance at schism, and who, superior to the weakness of their sex, have, with the sole arms of christian simplicity, subdued the efforts of an arbitrary and tyrannical force†! Happy once more is that church where the people in general have shewn such an exemplary attachment to catholic unity, to the persons of their lawful pastors, and to the instructions they have received from them.

In the joy of our heart ‡ we give humble thanks to God, that our diocese is one of those

* Non enim ipsi tormentis, sed tormenta ipsis defuerunt. St. Cypr. in Secess. Ep. 12.

† Infirma mundi elegit Deus ut confundat fortia, 1 Cor. 1.

‡ Exulto lætus & gratulor, fortissimi ac beatissimi fratres, cognita fide ac virtute vestra, in quibus mater ecclesia gloriata est, & nuper quidem cum confessione perstante, suscepta pœna est, quæ confessores Christi fecit extorres—crevit pugna, crevit & pugnantium gloria, St. Cypr. in Secess. Ep. 10.

where

where the pastors have distinguished themselves by their fidelity, and the flock by their docility, and where the murdering wolf has done the least mischief. It is our duty to render this public testimony to the piety of our people and to the zeal of our co-operators in the ministry*.

Why alas! is our joy interrupted by the melancholy recollection, that some of our clergy through seduction, fear or interest, after beginning with the fatal oath, have completed the work of schism! They have deserted their lawful pastor set over them by the church, to enlist under another who has no other appointment than from the civil power. Without any other title to the situations they hold than an unlawful and illusory election, without any other mission than what they pretend to derive from a bishop who himself is destitute of jurisdiction and of a diocese, they have presumed to seize on the churches of the true pastors, whom the arm of force had driven from them. The light of truth has broken through the mist of sophistry in

* Gratias ago Deo meo per Jesum Christum pro omnibus vobis, quia fides vestra annuntiatur in universo mundo. Philip. i.

which

which this question was enveloped, error has been exposed and confounded, the evidence of reason has been strengthened by the force of authority ; there is not a pretence of doubt or plea of excuse to cast a veil over the present question. How are these men fascinated not to yield obedience to the empire of truth*?

We have at different times entreated them, and we have reproved them in all patience and in all learning†; if they persist in obstinately shutting their eyes against the light of truth and their ears to our paternal voice, how is it possible for us to withhold that punishment which the church decrees against obstinate and contumacious christians?

Let us afford them a little more time in order to withdraw themselves from the stroke that is suspended over them. Let them no longer be influenced by human respect and a false point of honour; let them acknowledge their fault, and repair it. We conjure them to do this, by the tender feelings of a father, which we cannot but feel for our children, however culpable they have been. We en-

* Quis vos fascinavit non obedire veritati. Gal. 3.

† In omni patientiâ & doctrinâ. 2 Tim. 4.

treat them to do it in the name of the church whose tears they will thus staunch, in the name of religion, whose rights they will thus restore, for their own eternal welfare, and even for their present credit and character. There is sometimes more courage displayed in the candor of retracting an unlawful oath, than in the perseverance of rejecting it.

We had pursued the line of conduct traced out by the supreme Pontiff, and, upon the expiration of the term of forbearance he has prescribed, we had confirmed his sentence. We had observed the usual formalities on this occasion; but inquisitorial researches and overbearing force have stopped the circulation of the pastoral ordinance which we had prepared to accompany the brief of his Holiness: it is our present business to establish the regulations in question, and to endeavour to carry them into execution.

For these reasons, after having invoked the assistance of the Almighty; after having, in his divine presence, duly weighed the brief of our holy Father Pope Pius VI. of the date of April 13, in the present year, part of which, namely that which contains the cen-

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fures,

fures, we insert beneath*; regretting that it is not in our power to give the whole; after having

* EXTRACT from the BRIEF of his HOLINESS
P I U S VI.

April 13, 1791, Pages 48, 49, 50, 51, 52.

“ Taught, as we have been by these successive and
“ various crimes, that schism has got footing and gains
“ ground in France, which kingdom has deserved so well
“ of religion, and is so dear to us; hearing that each
“ day new elections of pastors both of the first and the
“ second order take place, and that, whilst the true mi-
“ nisters of the church are rejected, ravenous wolves are
“ admitted into the fold, we have felt ourselves pene-
“ trated with the most lively emotions of grief.

“ In order therefore to oppose without delay the fur-
“ ther progress of schism, to reclaim those who have
“ gone astray, to strengthen those who have continued
“ firm, to preserve the religion of this flourishing em-
“ pire; by and with the advice of our venerable bre-
“ thren the College of Cardinals, seconding the mea-
“ sures of the bishops belonging to the French Assembly,
“ and treading in the footsteps of our predecessors, We,
“ by the apostolical authority with which we are in-
“ vested, do, by these present letters, require all Cardi-
“ nals, Archbishops, Bishops, Abbots, Vicars, Canons,
“ Curates, Priests and all other Ecclesiastics whether
“ secular or regular, who have absolutely and uncondi-
“ tionally taken the oath concerning the constitution of
“ the Clergy, that poisonous source from which so
“ many evils and misfortunes have flowed upon the
church

having considered, what is of public notoriety,
that the head of the Church has received
from

“ church of France, to retract the same within the space
“ of forty days from the present date; under pain of
“ suspension from all ecclesiastical functions and of irre-
“ gularity, if they presume to exercise the same.

“ We particularly declare that the elections of the
“ undermentioned persons Expilly, Marolles, &c. to
“ the bishoprics of Quimper, Soissons, &c. are unlawful,
“ sacrilegious and null; as such we abrogate and annul
“ them, and at the same time we annul the pretended
“ erections of the bishopricks of Moulins, Chateau
“ Roux, and that of every other pretended new
“ bishopric.

“ We moreover declare that the said consecrations
“ of bishops were criminal, unlawful, sacrilegious and
“ contrary to the canons; and that the persons thus
“ rashly and uncanonically elected, are destitute of all
“ spiritual jurisdiction, and being thus unlawfully con-
“ secrated are suspended from the exercise of their
“ episcopal functions.

“ In like manner we declare to be suspended from
“ the exercise of their episcopal functions Charles
“ bishop of Autun, John Baptist bishop of Babylon, and
“ John Joseph bishop of Lydda, the sacrilegious confe-
“ crators or assistants at the said consecrations, as like-
“ wise we declare those to be suspended from the ex-
“ ercise of the sacerdotal or other ecclesiastical func-
“ tions, who by action, counsel or consent have concur-
“ red to the said execrable consecrations.

“ We therefore expressly prohibit and interdict the
“ said Expilly, and the other persons invalidly elected
“ and

from his Majesty and the bishops of France
full information concerning the nature of the
new

“ and unlawfully consecrated, under pain of suspension,
“ from presuming to arrogate to themselves any episco-
“ pal jurisdiction, or any other power which they have
“ not lawfully obtained; as also from giving dimissory
“ letters for orders, from constituting, deputing or con-
“ firming, under any pretext whatsoever, even that of a
“ pretended necessity for the administration of the sa-
“ craments and the care of souls, any pastors, vicars,
“ missionaries, assistants, functionaries, or other mini-
“ sters, by whatsoever name they may be called; from
“ issuing any ordinances or regulations, either indivi-
“ dually or collectively, in case they should meet to-
“ gether in a mock council, with respect to ecclesiastical
“ government: declaring and pronouncing to be null
“ and of no authority whatsoever, the dimissorials, de-
“ putations and confirmations, which they have had, or
“ may have the presumption to give, as well as all other
“ instruments or acts of the same nature, and all others
“ that may be consequent to the same, which have al-
“ ready or may hereafter be by them issued or per-
“ formed.

“ We forbid, under the like pain of suspension, both
“ the persons consecrated and the consecrators them-
“ selves to presume to confer the sacraments of confir-
“ mation, or of orders, or in any sort to exercise the
“ functions of episcopacy, from which they are at pre-
“ sent suspended.

“ Let then those who have received ordination from
“ the above mentioned know, that they also are sus-
“ pended

new constitution of the clergy, and of all the effects it has produced with respect to religion; which

“ pended from the exercise of their orders, and that
 “ they will become irregular if they presume to exercise them.

“ To prevent still greater evils, by our aforesaid authority, and by these present letters, we ordain and decree, that all other elections which have been or shall be made, according to the formalities of the said constitution, by the electors of the civil districts or departments, for churches that are actually vacant, and still more for those which have their lawful bishops; for the ancient sees, and still more for the pretended new ones, have been, are, and shall be void, unlawful, sacrilegious and null, hereby for the present and future times, disannulling and abrogating them; declaring moreover, that all ecclesiastics thus illegally and uncanonically chosen, or such as may be thus chosen to bishopricks or parishes, are destitute of all spiritual authority over souls; that the bishops who have been consecrated, all whom we include in the same manner as if they were named, and all who may be hereafter consecrated are and will remain suspended from the exercise of their episcopal order, in the same manner as curates thus invalidly instituted are and will continue suspended from the exercise of the sacerdotal ministry. We expressly forbid all persons who are or may be so elected to bishoprics, to receive from any metropolitan, or other bishop, episcopal consecration. We also prohibit all such false bishops, together with their sacrilegious consecrators, and all other

which mode of having recourse, in such circumstances, to the Holy See is conformable
to

“ other archbishops and bishops, from presuming, under any pretext whatsoever, to consecrate them. We also forbid the said persons who are, or may be so elected to bishoprics or curacies to attribute to themselves, in any sort, the rank or character of archbishops, bishops, curates or vicars; to assume the titles of the cathedral or parochial churches to which they have been so elected, or to arrogate to themselves any jurisdiction, authority or faculty respecting the conduct of souls, under pain of suspension and nullity, from which suspension none of the aforesaid can be absolved except by ourselves, or those who may have received a commission from the holy see for this purpose.

“ Exercising as we do the utmost lenity consistent with our obligations on the present occasion, we have contented ourselves, in order to remedy the present disorders, and to prevent a repetition of them, with declaring what the punishments are which are annexed to them by the holy canons. For we still hope in the Lord that the bishops who have acted as consecrators, and the ecclesiastics who have usurped the government of so many cathedral and parish churches, as well as all the authors and promoters of the constitution of the clergy, will see their errors, and that, being struck with repentance, they will return back to that fold of Christ from which through intrigue, artifice and fraud they have been seduced. We therefore exhort them with paternal tenderness, we entreat them, we conjure them

to the constant practice of the great churches of the East and of the West; and becomes indispensably necessary in our situation, when the earnest request of the French bishops to be permitted to meet in council has been rejected.

“ them in the Lord to resign the ministry they have
 “ usurped, to withdraw themselves from the ways of
 “ perdition in which they are engaged, and not to en-
 “ courage by their conduct the pretended philosophers
 “ of the age, to propagate amongst a christian people
 “ systems of doctrine which are monstrous in their kind,
 “ and which are in direct opposition to the institutions of
 “ Jesus Christ, to the tradition of the Fathers, and to
 “ the laws of the church. If however, which God for-
 “ bid, it should appear that our moderation and pater-
 “ nal exhortations have failed to produce their desired
 “ effect, let the guilty know that we do not mean to ex-
 “ empt them from those weightier punishments which
 “ the canons have decreed against them, that we shall
 “ declare them anathematized, and denounce them to
 “ the universal church as excommunicated persons, as
 “ schismatics, and as men separated from our commu-
 “ nion and that of the church. For we have learned
 “ from our predecessor St. Leo in his letter to Julian bishop
 “ of Coos; that *whoever voluntarily remains in the filth of*
 “ *his vices and the folly of his errors, it is necessary the laws*
 “ *should have their force with respect to him, and that he*
 “ *should meet with the fate of those whose unhappy conduct*
 “ *he has imitated.*”

After

After having reflected on what our fathers have taught us, that *it is principally to the Holy See, and to those bishops who are in union with their head we are to look up for the deposit of ecclesiastical doctrine*, which the apostles assign to the episcopal order*, and that he is not an orthodox catholic who denies that the Pope is the head, the pastor and the primate of the universal church, the father and the teacher of all christians, as the council of Florence expresses it, and that in this quality he is authorised, in the cases and forms appointed by the canons, to provide for the government of all dioceses, and for the due execution of all pastoral functions whatever, which are necessary for the safety and the benefit of our souls†.

After having considered that the light of truth has begun to spread from the height of the apostolical chair, in the answer which his Holiness has addressed to those bishops who were members of the National Assembly, and that his last instruction, addressed to the whole church of France, has precluded the very possibility of a doubt remaining concerning

† Bossuet's sermon on the unity of the church, preached before the assembly of the French clergy in 1681.

† Circular letter of the French clergy in 1655 printed by order of the assembly in 1682.

the uniform doctrine of the Pope and of the episcopal order, the more we have pondered upon which the more clearly we have discovered the tradition of our church, the language of our fellow-bishops, the doctrine and practice of the universal church, and that it is St. Peter himself who speaks by the voice of his worthy successor.

Finally, having reflected that in the present persecuted state of the Gallican church, it is not in the power of its bishops to receive and publish the apostolical decree in the ancient solemn forms which the discipline of our fathers have sanctioned, that the essential interests of religion are at stake, and that though we are deprived of the satisfaction of receiving in a body the decision of the supreme pastor, we are nevertheless bound to make known our desire of doing so, in order to fix the consciences of others, to strengthen our brethren in the faith, and to preserve that portion of the flock of Christ which is committed to our care from schism: —

WE DECLARE that we do receive, with all respect and submission, the decision pronounced by the Holy See on the 13th April in the present year 1791: and with regard to the censures and canonical penalties decreed at Rome

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in the present extraordinary circumstances against those members of the ecclesiastical body who have incurred the guilt of intrusion and perjury ; We, by virtue of our apostolical authority, exercising the right and fulfilling the duty which belong to us in quality of ordinary and immediate judge of ecclesiastical persons in all spiritual concerns, ordain that the aforesaid penalties shall have their full effect, and that those ecclesiastical persons, whether secular or regular, who are described in the extract of the brief of the 13th of April quoted above, shall incur the same, if within fifteen days after this notice shall have been given them, in such manner as circumstances shall permit (which however shall be sufficient to enable them to ascertain its authenticity) they do not repair the scandal they have given by an open and public retraction of the oath which they have unfortunately taken.

We declare moreover, in conformity with the brief of our Holy Father, that we do not hereby mean to withdraw those persons, who persevere in their evil ways, from that weightier punishment which the canons denounce against intruders, usurpers and schismatics.

Lastly, we prohibit all and every one of our ecclesiastics, whether secular or regular,
and

and all the faithful of our diocese in general, from acknowledging, in any case whatsoever, the Sieur Expilly, who calls himself bishop of Finisterre, in quality of bishop of the diocese of Leon, or from admitting of any spiritual power or jurisdiction whatsoever in the rectors, vicars or other priests who shall have been instituted or approved by him; requiring them to conduct themselves to the aforesaid persons, as the church appoints with respect to intruders and schismatics; with whom no intercourse whatever can be had in the execution of their functions, without a share in the guilt of their usurpation and schism.

London, August 20, 1791.

(Signed)

✠ JOHN FRANCIS, BISHOP OF LEON.

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 from acknowledging in any case whatsoever,
 the Saint Expiy, who calls himself Bishop
 of Finistère in quality of Bishop of the diocese
 of Leon, or from admitting of any kind
 of spiritual power or jurisdiction, whatsoever, in the
 regions, vicars or other priests who shall have
 been instituted or approved by him; requiring
 and them to consider themselves as the slaves
 and persons, as the church appoints with re-
 spect to intruders and schismatics; with-
 out any interposition whatsoever can be had in
 the execution of their function, without
 being in the cells of their submission and

Paris, August 20, 1791.

(Signed)

JOHN FRANCIS DUNN, Bishop of Leon.